

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00
INRE-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 /075 W
-----014705 141621Z /50

O R 141601Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7692
SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USNATO
USNMR SHAPE
CINC EUR VAIHINGEN
CINC USAREUR HEIDELBERG
CINC USAFE RAMSTEIN
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MPOL, MNUC, PARM, PEPR, GW, US
SUBJECT: APRIL 13 BUNDESTAG DEBATE ON ER WEAPON -
ANALYSIS

REFS: A) BONN 6791 DTG 131829Z APR 78

B) BONN 6772 DTG 131308Z APR 78

1. THE APRIL 13 BUNDESTAG DEBATE -- WHICH WAS IN ESSENCE A DEBATE ON THE ERW -- ILLUSTRATES THE EXTENT TO WHICH THIS MATTER HAS BEEN PROPELLED INTO THE MIDDLE OF FRG DOMESTIC POLITICS.

2. UNDERLYING THE CHANCELLOR'S REMARKS, THE OPPOSITION ATTACKS, AND OTHER STATEMENTS DURING THIS SESSION WAS THE BASIC DILEMMA WHICH HAS FACED THE SCHMIDT GOVERNMENT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS IN CONNECTION WITH THE ERW. THIS DILEMMA HAS BEEN HOW TO ADOPT A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ERW IN NATO AND AT THE SAME TIME RECKON WITH INTERNAL CRITICISM OF THE WEAPON WITHIN SCHMIDT'S OWN SPD PARTY. IT IS A POLITICALLY DANGEROUS DILEMMA, AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS WERE STRONGLY EXPLOITED BY OPPOSITION LEADERS IN ACCUSING SCHMIDT OF TOADYING TO HIS LEFT ON THE ONE HAND, AND KEEPING HIS PARTY AND THE PUBLIC IN THE DARK ABOUT THE "REAL VIEWS OF THE GOVERNMENT ON THE OTHER.

3. A SECOND THEME CENTRAL TO THIS DEBATE, ONE WHICH PLACED THE US SQUARELY IN THE MIDDLE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION, WAS THE QUESTION OF US-FRG RELATIONS. THIS SUBJECT, TOO, NOW SEEMS ON ITS WAY TO BECOMING AN ISSUE IN GERMAN DOMESTIC CONFIDENTIAL

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POLITICS. THE OPPOSITION REPEATEDLY AND VIGOROUSLY ATTACKED SCHMIDT AND HIS PARTY FOR A FECKLESS STANCE ON THE ERW WHICH, IT WAS CHARGED, PERMITTED THIS MATTER TO BECOME AN ISSUE BETWEEN THE US AND THE FRG, COMPLICATING PRESIDENT CARTER'S DECISION AND COMPOUNDING THE PRESIDENT'S PROBLEMS. MORE GENERALLY, OPPOSITION LEADER KOHL CHARGED SCHMIDT WITH THE MAJOR SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITY IN OTHER AREAS AS WELL FOR A POOR CLIMATE IN US-FRG RELATIONS, AND FOR TAKING AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP FOR GRANTED. AT THE SAME TIME, KOHL REPEATEDLY ASSERTED THAT IT WAS THE OPPOSITION, AND PARTICULARLY HIS CDU PARTY, WHICH HAS TRADITIONALLY BEEN THE GERMAN ADVOCATE OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THE US, AND WHICH REMAINS SO NOW.

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4. ANTICIPATING THESE LINES IN ADVANCE OF THE DEBATE,

COALITION SPOKESMEN WERE PREPARED TO COUNTER-ATTACK ON THE CHARGE OF US-GERMAN RELATIONS BY REPEATEDLY HIGHLIGHTING CSU CHAIRMAN FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS' RECENT REMARK TO THE EFFECT THAT THE AMERICAN PRESIDENT HAD "HEELED" BEFORE A RUSSIAN CZAR.

5. ON THE SUBSTANTIVE LEVEL, THE DEBATE PRODUCED FEW SURPRISES. SCHMIDT GAVE A MORE OPEN HISTORICAL EXPOSE THAN BEFORE OF HOW HE AND THE GOVERNMENT HAD HANDLED THE ERW, INCLUDING THE FACT THAT THEY HAD BEEN PREPARED, ALONG WITH OTHER ALLIES, TO JOIN IN A PRODUCTION-NEGOTIATION-DEPLOYMENT DECISION. SCHMIDT ALSO SPOKE CLEARLY OF SOVIET PREPONDERANCE IN CONVENTIONAL AND THEATER WEAPONS WITH REGARD TO EUROPE, AND STRESSED POSITIVELY THE ARMS CONTROL PROSPECTS EMERGING FROM THE PRESIDENT'S APRIL 7 DECISION, AS DID GENSCHER. A COALITION-SPONSORED RESOLUTION WHICH PASSED ALONG STRAIGHT PARTY LINES ALSO SERVED TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE COALITION WAS "ON BOARD" WITH THE PRESIDENT'S APRIL 7 DECISION.

6. KOHL AND STRAUSS, AS WAS TO BE EXPECTED, REITERATED THEIR VIEW IN FAVOR OF DEPLOYMENT OF THE ERW IN EUROPE, INCLUDING THE FRG. THE FACT THAT THEIR PARTIES THEN VOTED TO SUPPORT A RESOLUTION TO THIS EFFECT IN THE FACE OF THE COMPETING RESOLUTION SPONSORED BY THE COALITION HAD THE UNFORTUNATE EFFECT OF PUTTING THE OPPOSITION, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT, IN THE POSITION OF OPPOSING TAKING MAXIMAL NEGOTIATING AND ARMS CONTROL

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ADVANTAGE OF THE PRESIDENT'S ERW DECISION. WE ARE INCLINED TO SEE THIS SITUATION MORE AS A CASUALTY OF POLARIZED PARLIAMENTARY POLITICS THAN AN INDICATOR OF HOW THE OPPOSITION WILL VIEW FUTURE US AND ALLIED STEPS IN THIS AREA.

7. IN ALL, THE SESSION WAS CHARACTERIZED BY AN UNFORTUNATE "WHO STRUCK JOHN" QUALITY BOTH WITH REGARD TO THE ERW AND GERMAN HANDLING THEREOF, AND THE MATTER OF WHICH GERMANS ARE OR ARE NOT HELPING THE CAUSE OF US-FRG RELATIONS. FROM THE US VANTAGE, THERE WERE NO WINNERS IN THIS DEBATE. STOESEL

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